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June 15, 2015

TO: Each Health Deputy

FROM: Cynthia A. Harding, M.P.H.  
Interim Director

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Cynthia A. Harding".

SUBJECT: **ADVANCE COPY: MARKETING MATTERS: A WHITE PAPER ON STRATEGIES TO REDUCE UNHEALTHY FOOD AND BEVERAGE MARKETING TO YOUNG CHILDREN**

The Los Angeles County Department of Public Health (DPH) in partnership with ChangeLab Solutions is planning to release a comprehensive toolkit called Marketing Matters: A White Paper on Strategies to Reduce Unhealthy Food and Beverage Marketing to Young Children. The toolkit highlights feasible strategies for local communities to reduce the marketing of unhealthy foods and beverages to children. It was funded through the First 5 LA-funded Early Childhood Obesity Prevention Initiative (ECOPI).

There is a critical need for strategies to address unhealthy marketing of foods and beverages to children. Food marketing has a significant impact on the diet and health of children as companies are spending \$1.79 billion annually to specifically market food to children. The overwhelming majority of the foods and beverages marketed to children are of poor nutritional quality, which leads to overconsumption of unhealthy foods and an under consumption of fruits and vegetables.

In Los Angeles County, nearly one in four children (24%) ages five years and under drink one or more sodas or sugar sweetened beverages each day. Additionally, 42% of children five years and under consume fast food at least once a week. Poor dietary habits, which can be a result of unhealthy food marketing, can contribute to childhood obesity and other chronic diseases. The obesity rate among 3- and 4- year old children receiving WIC nutrition services in Los Angeles County was 19% in 2014, almost as high as the obesity rate among adults in Los Angeles County at 24%.

Marketing Matters provides a summary of the issue, legal background for local strategies, and a list of policy recommendations categorized by legal feasibility.

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Local communities are well positioned to take the lead in changing the food and beverage marketing environment in multiple settings. Through the ECOPI grant, DPH is working with 20 community agencies throughout Los Angeles County to support parent coalitions to explore how they can work together to reduce the marketing of unhealthy foods and beverages in their communities.

If you have any questions, please contact me or Paul Simon, M.D., M.P.H., of the Division of Chronic Disease and Injury Prevention at (213) 351-7825.

CAH:ps

Attachment

c: Mason Matthews  
Sharon Reichman  
Jeffrey D. Gunzenhauser, M.D., M.P.H.  
Paul Simon, M.D., M.P.H.